

# Earth Day 2004

## *Good News for the Environment*

A publication of the House Committee on Resources

Richard W. Pombo (R-CA), Chairman

Every American cares about the state of the environment. Parents want their kids to have clean, safe water to drink and healthy air to breathe. That's why over the last 30 years our nation has made huge strides in improving the health of our environment.

Remarkably, this progress has been directly-linked to a prospering economy. According to EarthDay.gov, during the same 30 year period, the U.S. Gross Domestic Product increased 161 percent. It's clear that the world's most prosperous nations are the most technologically advanced and thus, the most environmentally friendly.

Today, on Earth Day 2004, it's vital to recognize the steps that have been taken and the progress that has been made. Equally important is establishing a vision for the future. As environmental trend lines continue to get better, Americans will build on the success of the past to ensure a healthy future for generations to come.

Here's the good news on Earth Day 2004:

### **Water Quality and Resources**

Water quality has continually improved over the last 30 years. Overall, America's streams, rivers and lakes are cleaner and safer for swimming and fishing.

#### **Water Quality:**

- In 1961, 30% of water sources were judged to be poor or severely polluted – **today less than 5%** fall under that category. (Annual Report, Council on Environmental Quality)
- Rivers, lakes and streams are safe for swimming and fishing; **up as much as 55% since 1972**. (Annual Report, Council on Environmental Quality)
- **Industrial water pollution has been plunging since 1980** – with toxic organics and metals falling nearly 100%. (*Index of Environmental Indicators, Pacific Research Center*)
- In 2002, states reported that **94 % of the population served by community water systems was served by systems that met all health-based standards, up**



**from 79 % in 1993.** (Earthday.gov)

- President Bush's 2005 budget proposal requests an unprecedented **\$10 million for competitive grants to reduce pollution entering the Chesapeake Bay.** (Environmental Protection Agency)
- The President's FY 2005 budget **includes an unprecedented \$45 million for the Great Lakes Legacy Program that will help clean up the Great Lakes over the next five years.** The lakes are the largest system of fresh surface water on Earth, containing roughly 18 percent of the world supply. (Environmental Protection Agency)

#### **Water Resources:**

- **The President's FY 2005 budget includes \$21 million, an increase of \$13.3 million for Water 2025,** a program that strategically addresses the problem of competing demands for a finite water supply. (Department of the Interior)
- Water 2025 will fund needed research and development that will provide more affordable water treatment technologies and increase water supplies in critical areas.

#### **Wetlands:**

- In 2002, the President signed legislation reauthorizing the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, which will help keep our water clean and help provide habitat for hundreds of species of wildlife. **The bill will save and improve millions of acres of wetlands.** (resourcescommittee.house.gov)

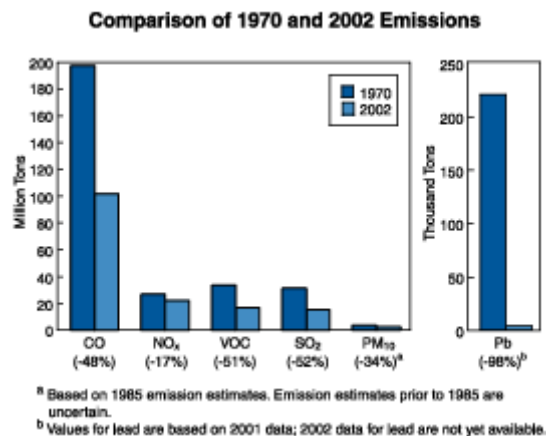


- Since the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program began in 1990, **a total of 167,000 acres have been restored or protected.** (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service)
- To date, **more than \$139 million in grants** have been awarded to 25 states and one U.S. territory for wetlands restoration and conservation. (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service)
- **Rates of annual wetland losses have decreased from almost 500,000 acres a year three decades ago to a loss of less than 100,000 acres averaged annually since 1986.** We are making great progress. (Earthday.gov)

## Improving our Air Quality

The nation's air is much cleaner today than it was 30 years ago. Overall, hazardous air pollutants have dropped and new technologies are moving us into a cleaner, healthier future.

- Over the last 30 years, **total emissions of six principal air pollutants have decreased by nearly 25 %**, resulting in lower concentrations of these pollutants in ambient air. (Environmental Protection Agency)

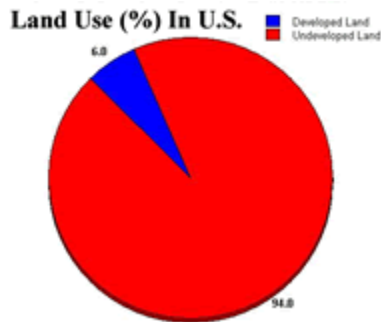


- Smog in major U.S. cities, including Chicago, Los Angeles, and Washington D.C. has declined steadily since the 1960s**; falling more than 50% between 1972 and 1996. (*Index of Environmental Indicators*)
- Pollutants in city air start to fall when average annual per capita income reaches \$3,300**. (World Development Report, World Bank)
- U.S. mercury emissions have dropped by over 42% since 1995**. (Pacyna et al. 2003, Friedli et al 2003)
- This year President Bush will issue the first-ever mandatory regulation of mercury emissions**. (Council on Environmental Quality)
- In April 2003, EPA issued a proposed rule that will dramatically **reduce pollution from heavy-duty diesel engines used in construction, agricultural, and industrial equipment**. Soot and NO<sub>x</sub> emissions will decrease by more than 90 percent by 2014, and the sulfur content of diesel fuel will be cut 99 percent by 2010. (Environmental Protection Agency)

### Interstate Air Quality Rule:

- President Bush has implemented a new air quality rule that will reduce emissions of sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) and nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>) **by nearly 70 percent** by 2018. SO<sub>2</sub> emissions would be reduced by 3.6 million tons in 2010 and by another 2 million tons per year when the rules are fully implemented. NO<sub>x</sub> emissions would be cut by 1.5 million tons in 2010 and 1.8 million tons annually in 2015. (Environmental Protection Agency)

### Land Use and Conservation



Less than 6% of 2.3 billion acres in the United States is developed. Overall, our forests, and open and wild spaces are healthy and teeming with wildlife.  
(Natural Resources Inventory: Land Use)

### Forests:

- America has 749 million acres of forestland, 14 million acres more than in 1920. (U.S. Department of Agriculture)
- The **Healthy Forests Restoration Act**, passed by the House Committee on Resources, was signed into law by President Bush on December 3, 2003. The Act will restore the health and vitality of forests and rangelands, and help reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfires.  
(resourcescommittee.house.gov)



### National Parks, Monuments and Lands:

- The **National Park System encompasses 83.6 million acres** in the United States. (National Park Service)
- The President is fulfilling his **commitment to address the National Park maintenance backlog**. To meet his commitment of \$4.9 billion over five years for park maintenance and construction, the President has secured \$ 2.8 billion, and proposed \$ 1.1 billion in his FY 2005 budget, for **a total of \$3.9 billion to date**. (Earthday.gov)

- Additionally, for the first time in history, the National Park Service will have a full condition assessment and a facility condition index to **prioritize ongoing maintenance needs**. (Earthday.gov)
- **National Monuments cover 2,706,954.9 million acres** in the United States. (National Park Service)
- Over **663 wilderness areas** exist in the United States covering almost 106 million acres. (Department of the Interior)
- There are about **60 million acres of National Forest roadless lands** in the United States, not including acreage designated as Wilderness area. (U.S. Forest Service)

## **Toxic Site Cleanup**

- The President signed historic, bipartisan Brownfields reform legislation in January 2002. The President already released \$73 million in new grants last year. The President's 2005 budget includes **\$210 million for Brownfields cleanup**, ensuring that private parties still in business are cleaning up the pollution they caused. (Environmental Protection Agency)
- To make real progress on the remaining sites, where the polluters no longer exist, the President's FY 2005 budget **includes \$1.4 billion**, a \$124 million (10 percent) increase over 2004. (Environmental Protection Agency)

"While fiercely supportive of efforts to preserve and protect the environment, most Americans are using yesterday's news while making critical decisions about behavior and policy on key environmental issues. This dependence on mythology threatens to block progress on important environmental initiatives...it is vital that we debunk these myths so that the public can most effectively address the environmental needs of today."

Kevin J. Coyle  
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